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WHOLE No. 606



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HUMOR IN HOMER AND IN VERGIL

Do laughter and fun find legitimate place in the epic, whose serious tone was emphasized as early as Aristotle?¹ Certainly most epics show little trace of humor. Wilhelm Wundt² has taught us that the epic hero is preceded by the 'Märchen' hero, either the strong and valorous man, often naive and stupid, the type that develops into an Achilles, or the Odysseus type, sly and clever, winning by his wits. Most of us prefer the latter type. Everybody loves Brer Rabbit. In such a tale comic elements are inevitable. As the art epos develops, these tend to disappear. How far their elimination has proceeded in a given poem depends upon how far the poem has developed toward the art epos.

Of all great epics those of Homer are at once the most brilliant and the most primitive. In them a condition obtains which is quite different from that of the later epics. The earlier epics are abundantly furnished with laughs and smiles, even if, as we shall see, these are not all concomitants of merriment.

Laughter suggests the pleasant in life. Yet we all know how intensely disagreeable laughter can become on occasion. Nothing is so maddening as the laugh of scorn, nothing so mean as the glee of a Quilp.

It can scarcely be doubted that it was chiefly the lower and less humane types of laughter by which evolving man learned to express his amusement. Early fun and early laughter are predominantly cruel. Our primitive instincts tend to reappear in the mob. How often we hear it said that the humor of the crowd is of low grade and its laughter cruel!

In an article entitled *Homeric Laughter* (*The Classical Journal* 23.436-447) I have shown that Homeric laughter is marked not so much, as the expression usually suggests, by heartiness and boisterousness as by scorn and cruelty. In the 48 books of the two poems there is only one wholly unexceptionable laugh (*Iliad* 6.471), and there are few instances of a smile free from certain, or all, unsavory elements.

Hellenic sportsmanship was, possibly, not of the best. Professor Percy Gardner³ says that the defeated contestant in an athletic event was often jeered, and sometimes took his way home along bypaths and alleys. It was common to taunt a defeated or even a dying foe, sometimes with, sometimes without, a touch of grim humor. Othryoneus had been fighting on the side of Troy to win Cassandra for his wife. To this end he had promised her father, Priam, that he would perform great deeds of derring-do. But he falls beneath the weapon of Idomeneus, who sarcastically offers

the corpse a reward if he will now cast in his lot with the Greeks (*Iliad* 13.373-380). Pulling him by the foot from the mêlée (383), he invites the dead man to come on board the Greek ships in order to discuss the question of marriage contracts, promising not to be illiberal in the matter of bridal gifts (381-382). The humor lies partly in the flagrant incongruity of dealing with a dead man as if he were alive and sentient. Lycaon clasps the knees of Achilles and pleads piteously for his life (*Iliad* 21.71-96). Achilles is relentless, and after slaying him throws his body into the Scamander, bidding him lie there amid the fishes, who will cleanse, but not with kindly thought, his gory wounds (122-123). Polydamas, the Trojan, who has killed Prothenor with a spear thrust, remarks that a Greek is carrying off his spear and seems like to use it as a staff to Hades (*Iliad* 14.456-457). Patroclus slays Priam's son Cebriones with a mass of rock hurled full on his temples. The smitten man pitches headlong from his car like a diver, and Patroclus, with bitter jest, says, "Heaven, what agility, how deftly thrown That somersault!"⁴ If he could do that sort of thing in the sea, Patroclus remarks, he would be a worldbeater in diving for oysters. Troy, he continues, certainly can boast accomplished tumblers! (*Iliad* 16.745-750).

This painful element is less marked in Vergil, and for two reasons. It may well be that the Roman was more sportsmanlike than the Greek. Again, Vergil was himself a compassionate soul. Professor E. Adelaide Hahn has recently written both sympathetically and convincingly on Vergil's tendency to favor the under dog in every contest⁵. This, however, in itself, need not prevent him from depicting a conqueror's arrogant conduct. But he will do so less vividly and convincingly when he has in his own soul no echo of the sentiments which he puts into the mouth of the conqueror. Sometimes he omits the arrogance entirely (10.500); sometimes, as in the words of Mezentius over Orodes (10.737), the conqueror's words are a boast rather than a taunt, and may even connote a compliment to the dead: *Pars belli haud temnenda, viri, iacet altus Orodes*. Over Mezentius, when his turn comes to die, Aeneas exclaims (10.897-898), *Ubi nunc Mezentius acer et illa efferat vis animi?*

Sometimes we suspect that Vergil introduces a taunt only because his model, Homer, did so. This suspicion seems all the better justified when the taunt is couched in much the same terms as Homer had used. Liger kills Tarquinius and adds (10.557-560):

*Istic nunc, metuende, iace. Non te optima mater
condet humi, patrioque onerabit membra sepulcro:*

¹Poetics, Chapter 4.

²*Völkerpsychologie, Mythos und Religion* 1.350.

³*New Chapters in Greek History*, 299 (London, John Murray, 1892). Professor Gardner gives no references; but one thinks of Aristophanes, *Ranae* 1089-1098.

⁴I use Lord Derby's translation of the *Iliad*, Cowper's version of the *Odyssey*. Both are easily accessible in Everyman's Library.

⁵In a paper entitled Vergil and the "Under-Dog", *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 56 (1925), 185-212.

alibus linqere feris, aut gurgite mersum
unda feret, piscesque impasti vulnera lambent.

The words imitate Homer's, but the characteristically grimly humorous thought that the fishes will cleanse the blood from the dead man's wounds without any kindly intent (Iliad 21.122-123), but in satisfaction of their piscine appetites, is quite absent. The sarcastic *metuende* suggests the words of the Greeks over Hector's corpse (Iliad 22.373-374). Parallel to the taunt of Patroclus over Cebriones (Iliad 16.745-750) are the *dicta amara* of Aeneas over Lucagus, who is rolling on the ground, having pitched from his car with a spear through his thigh (10.592-594):

Lucage, nulla tuos currus fuga segnis equorum
prodidit, aut vanae vertere ex hostibus umbrae;
ipse rotis saliens iuga deseris.

Each taunt assumes that the involuntary act of the body that has received its death blow is voluntary and purposeful. But the Greek is much more detailed and picturesque. However, in this instance Vergil has retained the central element of the humor, which is essentially that of wilful misinterpretation. The same element is found more independently in 10.324-327; there Vergil states that, had not Cydon been backed so well by his brothers, he, pleasure lover, forgetting all about his boy loves, would be lying in death, struck by a Dardan foe while he was following Clytius, a new joy.

Vergil adds taunts which, with no perceptible display of humor⁶, charge the foe with effeminacy (9.614-620). To one taunt, however, a humorous turn is given by its skilful use in retort. Numanus (9.598) had twitted the Trojans with staying behind walls to fight and had called them *bis capti Phryges*. Ascanius succeeds in killing the taunter, and, as he sends an arrow through his brain, says (9.634-635), *I, verbis virtutem inlude superbis! Bis capti Phryges haec Rutulis responsa remittunt!* The sting of Numanus's words lies in their reminding the Trojans of previous defeats. The same *motif* appears when Turnus tells Pandarus (9.742) that he will soon be reporting to Priam, whom by implication he is going to visit, that an Achilles has been found on the soil of Italy too.

In the Odyssey (22.290-291) Philoetius pierces Ctesippus in the breast and says,

Take this—a compensation of thy pledge
Of hospitality, the huge oxhoof
Odysseus at thy bounteous hand received....

In a similar spirit, in Odyssey 22, the swineherd and the neatherd taunt Melanthius, the goatherd, under whose taunts they had themselves often writhed. They have caught him supplying the suitors with arms, they have tied his hands behind him, and they have strung him up to the ceiling of the storeroom (178-194). As they leave him to his misery they say facetiously (195-198):

Now, good Melanthius, on that fleecy bed
Reclined, as well befits thee, thou wilt watch
All night, nor when the golden dawn forsakes
The ocean stream will she escape thine eye....

The humor of the taunt is enhanced if the victim be a god. We have then a little of the unholy glee that a child feels when he hears his beloved teacher 'bawled out' by another Olympian or by a super-olympian superintendent. Herein Homer stands in a class by himself. Pallas Athena bowls Ares over with a heavy mass of stone that strikes the god full in the neck, and then taunts him with the inferiority of his strength to hers (Iliad 21.402-414). When Aphrodite, his lady love, comes along, and, like some big sister, leads him out of the press (416-418), Pallas lays her, too, low, and she and her lover lie helpless side by side upon the ground, while Pallas remarks that she only wishes that all the Trojans were as valiant and stout as Aphrodite. Then would the warlike labors of the Greeks have been at an end long ago! (423-433).

But of all taunts the least sportsmanlike and the least justified are those delivered over the dead body of Hector. Achilles stripped the armor from his prostrate foe (Iliad 22.368-369). Then the Greeks thronged around him, each adding a wound, and saying, as they looked at one another (370-374), 'Hector is certainly a bit easier to handle now than when he was wrapping our ships with fire'. "Thus would they say, then stab the dead anew". I have some difficulty in understanding the pro-Greek poet who could insert this bit, unless it is a very magnanimous tribute to the prowess of a fallen foe.

The taunt is usually uttered when the conflict has been decided; at its beginning we are regaled with threats, often spiced with humor as well as with malice. Epeius, the boxer, announces that, if any venture to enter the lists against him, that man's flesh he will pound and his bones he will smash (Iliad 23.672-675). So let the man's seconds be at hand to carry him from the field. The humor here does not depend on any contrast between boastful promise and weak performance, for Epeius proves as good as his word. In a similar situation, Irus, the blatant beggar, vituperates Odysseus, whom he has challenged to a fistic encounter, and threatens to smash every grinder from his gums, as men untooth a pig that pilfers the grain (Odyssey 18.26-29).

Both Homer and Vergil, then, make their characters indulge in taunt and boast, but the taunts and the boasts in Homer are at once more homely and more picturesque than those in Vergil.

Allied to the scorn which seems essential to the taunt are mockery and sarcasm. Bitter mockery—mockery is apt to be bitter—breathes through the words of Athena anent the wound inflicted by Diomedes on the hand of Aphrodite (Iliad 5.421-425). He says, in effect, that the seductress, elated by her success with Helen, must have been trying to lead some other Greek woman astray, and, while she was caressing her hand, must have scratched her own tender flesh with the woman's brooch. The taunts of Antinous have an even more sarcastic flavor. After the speech (Odyssey 1.368-380) in which Telemachus warns the suitors off the premises and declares his own majority and independence, Antinous remarks (384-387) that

⁶I question this statement. Let the reader look at 616. C. K.>.

the gods themselves must have been giving the youngster a lesson in sublimity, and hazards the pious wish that a man of such eloquence be never distracted therefrom by the cares of governing Ithaca. When Telemachus returns to the palace after an impassioned appeal to the people against the suitors (2.296-300), Antinous runs to meet him with a laugh, and calls him (303) "Telemachus, in eloquence sublime and of a spirit not to be controlled". He insolently urges the helpless young man to bear the suitors no grudge, but to sit and feast with them as in the good old days before his sudden enlightenment (304-305). This gives the other suitors their cue (325-336). One says that Telemachus clearly intends to do them a mischief, either by the sword or by poison (326-330). Another remarks (331-336) what a shame it would be if he should lose his life on the sea, in the course of his intended search for his father; they would then have to go to all the trouble of settling his domestic affairs, dividing his wealth, and marrying his mother!

Vergil is not free from sarcasm, but it is much milder and less humorous. Allecto, posing as Calybe, says to Turnus that he is a fool for exposing himself to such peril in behalf of the Latins who have used him so shabbily (Aeneid 7.421-424). Then she cries, I nunc, ingratiss offer te, inrise, periclis. Is Juno speaking sarcastically (10.611) when, in an unusually submissive reply to her husband, who has addressed her with unusual respect, not to say affection (607-610), she calls her lord *pulcherrime coniunx*? Perhaps it is doing the goddess some injustice to call her expression sarcasm. But *is* sarcasm after all inconsistent with diplomacy?

Just as little are vituperation and humor mutually exclusive; though vituperation may be quite without humor, it usually is not. There is little of such railing in the Aeneid. Juno's reply to Venus (10.63-95) verges on railing, but is conspicuously lacking in humor. Tarcho's invective when he tries to stop the rout of the Tyrrhenians has a few lighter touches (11.732-740). Of vituperation both Greek and Roman were excessively fond; they managed to develop a vast and varied magazine of uncomplimentary epithets, often exceedingly picturesque and humorous. The first altercation in the Iliad Athena tries to allay, but she gives Achilles, provided he eschew violence, *carte blanche* to say anything that comes into his head (Iliad 1.211). So Agamemnon is called by Achilles (225) a sot, with eye of dog and heart of deer, etc. This wine lacks bouquet. Such humor as there is here is excessively crude. The quality improves in the epithets addressed by Melanthius to the seeming beggar Odysseus (Odyssey 17.219-220), "This morsel-hunting mendicant obscene, Defiler base of banquets", and in the language which Irus addresses to his supposed rival in the trade of beggary (Odyssey 18.26-27):

with what volubility of speech
The table hunter prates, like an old hag
Collided with chimney smutch!

Some of this suggests the more successful employment of this low type of wit in the parodic names of the

warriors in the Battle of the Frogs and the Mice.

In the catalogue of humorous devices irony has long enjoyed a well defined place. Essentially it is merely saying less than one knows or feels. So it is often found in the service of sarcasm. But it may be more genial. Even when it is cruel, it need not be sarcastic. It appears in its simplest form in the passage (Iliad 14.470-474) in which Ajax, burning to avenge the death of Prothoenor, misses the slayer of his friend and hits Archelochus, the son of Antenor. He then calls aloud to the man he had intended to hit, and asks if the slain man is an equivalent for the death of Prothoenor. The victim seems to be no common or ignoble man. Can he be the brother of Antenor, or, perhaps, his son? He *looks* like him! 'Thus spake he, though well he knew' (475). Concealment of one's knowledge often takes the form of *miosis*, or understatement, which is especially characteristic of American humor. A typical ancient example is the conservative statement of Achilles (Iliad 20.362-363):

Small shall be that Trojan's cause for joy
Who comes within the compass of my spear!

The understatement may be so much below the truth as to be in effect its opposite. Odysseus, in the hut of the faithful swineherd, offers to let himself be thrown headlong from a cliff if he be not telling the truth. Eumaeus answers (Odyssey 14.402-405),

Yes, stranger, doubtless I should high renown
Obtain for virtue among men,—if, having first
Invited thee and at my board regaled,
I, next, should slay thee!

There is a variety of irony, the dramatic irony, so called, which, though it may be terrible and thrilling, as it so often is in tragedy, is also at times extremely comic. One of the characters is represented as being ignorant of something more or less important, of which the reader, or, more usually, since this type of irony is especially adapted to dramatic presentation, the spectator, is fully possessed. We thus appreciate significances of which the actor is blissfully, and therefore often comically, ignorant. In the Iliad there is little opportunity for this sort of irony. In the Odyssey, which from its beginning tends like a drama toward an *anagnorisis* or *recognition*, or rather indeed toward a whole series of them, there is a fairer field for its effective use. In a sense, dramatic irony is not so much concentrated in certain parts of the poem as pervasive of the whole action. In Book 3, just when the long exile of Odysseus is drawing to a close, Telemachus definitely lays aside the hope of his father's return. Up to this moment hope has kept him inactive. Now he will be obliged to play the man. But this he never will do while he merely waits for his father's return to set all right. So, in the very presence of one whom we know, though he does not, to be Pallas Athena, his sire's protectress, he declares that he can no longer expect the fulfillment of his long-cherished wish, even though the gods themselves should purpose it (3.226-228). Later in the poem (14.363-368), after listening to one of the hero's baseless fabrications, which, however, does contain a

single germ of truth, a promise of his master's speedy return, Eumaeus accepts the mass of falsehood and rejects the atom of truth. All unwitting, he reviles his master for inventing such palpable lies, though the tale had contained more than a hint that Odysseus would probably find it convenient to return in disguise.

There is grim, though amusing, irony in the prayer of the suitors when they have watched an unknown beggar knock down and drag out Irus, their clumsy errand boy and hanger-on. To the beggar they say (18.112-113),

Zeus and all his assessors in the skies
Vouchsafe thee, stranger, whatsoe'er it be,
Thy heart's desire!

A delicious bit of dramatic irony is found in *Odyssey* 13. Odysseus in his sleep has just been landed on his native isle by his self-sacrificing Phaeacian friends. He awakes, and, with senses confused, fails entirely to recognize where he is. Athena in disguise accosts him and tells him he is in Ithaca. Odysseus, *suo more*, tells her a cock and bull story about himself. When he has ended, the goddess compliments him upon his inventiveness, adding slyly, what the reader has gleefully known all along, that it is quite thrown away upon her (291-300).

Another interesting use of dramatic irony occurs in the address of the giant Cyclops to his pet ram (*Odyssey* 9.447-455). The animal stands before him at the entrance to the cave, with the arch-plotter Odysseus clinging beneath him, a scant twelve inches from the giant's eager hands. Cyclops wonders why for once the beast is not leading the rest of the flock to the upland pastures, but has lingered behind all. His words are not without pathos. They point to the one saving element in an ugly character, which, however, must not be represented as entirely evil. Says he (456-457):

Ah that thy heart
Were as my heart and that distinct as I
Thou couldst articulate, so shouldst thou tell
Where hidden he eludes my furious wrath.

If, as is not true of all, you still at that moment sympathize wholeheartedly with Odysseus, you cannot but smile. The humor of the No-man incident (9.413-414) lies not so much in the pun as in the dramatic irony to which it contributes.

Dramatic irony is less used in the *Aeneid*. Turnus addresses Allecto the Fury, who, he thinks, is Calybe, in more disrespectful guise than he would have used if he had known who she really was (7.440-444). After Vergil has told us (4.1-14) how deeply in love Dido is with her Trojan guest, it is little else than ironical to make her tell us how she might have fallen in love with him if her heart were not buried with her former husband (15-19, 20-27). There is a little irony in the Sinon story (2.122-138), and perhaps elsewhere, but it is not handled in any humorous way.

This ironic pretence of ignorance sometimes manifests itself as wilful misinterpretation. Many years ago, in my undergraduate days, I was walking with a friend along the streets of my College town. He pulled

me back, after we had passed a window where sat a watch repairer with his magnifying glass upon his forehead. "What! Does the fool think he can see with that glass up there?", queried my jocose companion. I admit, in fact I vigorously proclaimed at the time, the utter crudeness of the quip, but I have come to see that it possessed the chief and essential element of irony. We have already noticed how ironically Athena misinterprets the wound of Aphrodite, how Polydamas thinks of the spear which he had just driven through the shoulder of his foe as a staff to help that warrior on his way to Hades (*Iliad* 14.456-457), how Patroclus misinterprets (*Iliad* 16.745-750) the dying plunge of Cebriones as the trick of an expert tumbler (such as Cretan paintings depict), and how Achilles misinterprets the activity of fishes of the Scamander upon Lycaon's body as an awkward attempt to cleanse his gory wounds (*Iliad* 21.122-123). We might add the promise of the Cyclops Polyphemus to Odysseus, that in return for the luscious strong drink he will accord his guest a requital gratifying and altogether to his taste (*Odyssey* 9.369-370). It turns out to be a promise that Odysseus shall be the last of the Greek intruders to invade the giant's maw.

This last approximates 'Galgenshumor'. So do certain of the taunts uttered over the dead and the dying, especially the passage where it is said of corpses slain in battle that they are a more welcome sight to carrion birds than to their widowed wives (*Iliad* 11.161-162).

(To be concluded)

WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY

JOSEPH WILLIAM HEWITT

Der Römische Ritterstand. Ein Beitrag zur Sozial- und Personengeschichte des Römischen Reiches. By Arthur Stein. Munich: C. H. Beck (1927). Pp. XIII + 503. \$6.

Professor A. Stein's work, *Der Römische Ritterstand*, a long needed study of the Roman equestrian order in the imperial period, is, Professor Stein says himself, the result of his many years of occupation with the *Prosopographia* (VII). It is not intended to be a new hand-book on a much discussed theme which would compete with the works of Mommsen, Hirschfeld, Domaszewski, and others whose contributions in this field are still classics. Our author aims to elucidate the social changes which took place in Roman society during the imperial period and thus to offer a contribution "zur römischen Familien- und Personengeschichte" of the Empire (VIII). This limited aim, however, is in itself, in view of the great mass of widely scattered evidence, a very laborious and ambitious undertaking. All the reviewer can aspire to do is to give a more or less limited exposition of the trend of the author's argument and conclusions.

No account of the Roman Equites, who, during the Empire, formed a class socially, politically, and economically definite, could be complete and intelligible without at least a short outline of the historical development of the *Ordo Equestris*, which was destined in the course of time to change from a national Roman

body into a cosmopolitan body. Professor Stein does well, then, to begin with such an outline. Chapter I gives the history of the order in the Republican period¹.

After a preliminary treatment of the different elements that composed the Ordo Equester, of the economic contrast between knights and senators, and of the reasons why C. Gracchus was able to bestow political privileges upon the knights at the expense of the Senate (1-13), there is a searching investigation of the historical evidence (supplied by Livy, Plutarch, Diodorus, and Appian) for the Lex Iudiciaria of C. Gracchus, a law which transferred the prerogative of sitting as *iudices* in the law courts from the senators to the knights (13-21). The question whether the *iudices* were drawn from the whole body of the *equites* or only from the *equites equo publico* alone is decided in favor of the former view (20).

The author then passes to a very careful treatment of the *census equester* and the honorary privilege of sitting in the fourteen rows (21-30). Nor are the *insignia* neglected; much space is devoted to the *anulus aureus* as a symbol of equestrian rank. Attention is called also to the fact that, after Hadrian, the gold ring lost its original significance and became a symbol of fictitious *ingenuitas*, without the grant of equestrian status (45; compare also 141, 158). The theory of Domaszewski, that the Emperors Septimius Severus and Gallienus conferred knighthood by the grant of the ring, the former upon all *principales*, the latter upon soldiers in general, is thus proved to be without foundation (46-47, 141, 158).

The contrast between the senatorial and the equestrian orders was at first of an economic nature. With the beginning of the principate this economic difference began to disappear and was displaced by contrasts of political character (51). Though the equestrian order was originally a military organization, it became political; from the cavalry of the Roman citizen army a new social class developed, bound to the person of the *princeps* by civil and military appointments. Passing on to Augustus, who drew the equestrian order into the imperial service and thus forged a mighty political weapon against the Senate, the author establishes a link with the subject proper of the book, namely the transformation of the Ordo Equester under the Empire (Chapter II).

First the author proves that henceforth the Ordo Equester appears as a "geschlossene Körperschaft" including only *equites equo publico* (57). This organized body elected as its head a *princeps iuventutis* (58), an office whose incumbency was, as the author conclusively proves (against Mommsen), before the Flavian period fully compatible with membership in the Senate (84). The yearly parade, on July 15 (*transvectio equitum*)—during the Republic a mere procession), was an obvious sign of the union of all members of the

equestrian order, although only the able-bodied knights, formed in *turmae*, and commanded by *sevir equitum Romanorum*, participated in it (62-63). Closely connected with the *transvectio* was the *probatio equitum*, which amounted to an examination of the equipment and the physical fitness of the knights, and was a kind of military "Hauptrapport" (64). This yearly parade is to be sharply distinguished from the *census* which affected the whole body of the *equites*. It took place not annually, but *frequenter* (a fact which Mommsen failed to see), and now became the means of testing the qualifications for admission to the Order (63-65). The difference between the annual parade of the *turmae* and the *census* of the entire body of the knights receives added significance though the evidence adduced that Augustus employed two different *collegia* to assist him in these tasks, a fact to which little attention had previously been paid. These *collegia* were the *IIIviri centurias equitum recognoscendi censoria potestate*, who exercised their functions at the annual parade, and the *Xviri legendis equitum decuriis censoria potestate*, whose duty it was, among other things, to revise the lists (67-69).

Many other questions are then taken up, among them the qualifications for admission to the Ordo Equester (70-74), social distinctions within the body of the *equites* (96-105), and the relations of the knights to the senatorial order. It is pointed out that equestrian rank never became hereditary (74, 76, 81, and *passim*), and that among the members of the Ordo Equester two categories can be distinguished: those who attained to procuratorial positions, and those who, after their military service in the capacity of equestrian officers, either retired to private life or attained honors in their native cities and provinces (96-97, 99). The investigation that follows is devoted particularly to men who entered upon a procuratorial career (105). This chapter thus contains a valuable reexamination of the theories that have been advanced in regard to the Ordo Equester under the Empire.

Since the equestrian order was open to all qualified Roman citizens, and since its members might, after a successful career, be enrolled in the senatorial order, Professor Stein attempts now to trace the social rise of the equestrian order (under the Empire), and above all to discuss the important question from what classes of persons the equestrian and the senatorial orders were replenished (106-108). To this question Chapters III and IV are devoted. That the Ordo Equester was replenished from 'the third order' is, on the whole, true. To this source, however, are to be added (a) a great number of freedmen, who, in spite of the fact that the qualifications for admission to the equestrian order were made stricter (free birth was the most important of them), not only became knights, but found their way into the Senate, (b) distinguished *peregrini* who attained knighthood, often simultaneously with citizenship, (c) plebeians who began their career in the public or imperial civil service and succeeded in crossing the boundary from the lower *cursus* into the equestrian career, (d) provincial notables and municipal aristocrats, and (e) soldiers who rose from the ranks and

¹The following conspectus will offer the best indication of the scope and contents of the book: I. Origin of the Ordo Equester (1-53); II. The Transformation of the Ordo Equester Under the Empire (54-106); III. The Sources of Replenishment of the Ordo Equester (107-194); IV. Advancement into the Senatorial Order (195-362); V. The Domicile of the Knights (363-418); VI. Social, Economic, and Political Position of the Roman Ordo Equester (419-448); VII. Disintegration of the Ordo Equester (449-459); Conclusion (460-468); Indices (469-501); Addenda (502-503).

through their merits attained equestrian military appointments. Since all these groups kept replenishing the equestrian order, they are described, and their representatives are listed in historical sequence. The conclusion is finally reached that the members of the *Ordo Equester*, especially the equestrian office-holding nobility, came, in the majority of cases, from non-equestrian families, and that the Order was replenished in the course of time from lower and lower social strata of the population (194). The more distinguished equestrian families passed into the senatorial order.

The development of this social rise is taken up in Chapter IV, which is the most difficult and the most technical chapter in the book. It might properly be divided into three parts: (a) admission of men of low birth into the Senate (202-213), (b) the advancement of knights to the Senate (213-219), and (c) the social rise of the equestrian families (293-362).

That the senatorial order should be replenished from the second (equestrian) class lies in the nature of things. Thus the *Ordo Equester* can be denominated the *seminarium* of the Senate (202). The admission of knights and men of the lower class to the Senate was started by Sulla, and was continued on an increased scale by Caesar. Among the reasons for this admission political exigency was the most important (215). But the admission of a knight to the Senate did not always amount to an elevation, since the rank of men in procuratorial positions, especially in the second and the third centuries, was not inferior to that of many senators; such a transfer from one order to the other was often considered rather a demotion (216-217). However, this transfer meant much to the country nobility and municipal officials (217). Very important is the treatment of those officers who, although they came from the Greek East, were admitted to the Senate (222-225, 239-241). Of great importance, too, is the discussion of the peculiar relations of the *praefecti praetorio* to the senatorial order. They received the *ornamenta consularia* and the title *vir clarissimus*, but during their incumbency they were senators only in exceptional cases (252-263, 262); the majority of them were knights (255, 257). It was only after Trajan and especially after Septimius Severus that they received consular rank. After Caracalla they even attained more or less regularly the *praefectura urbis* (260-262). The current theory that Severus Alexander introduced changes in this system is rejected (255-256, 262). It was during the rule of the infamous oriental debauchee Elagabalus that an arbitrary confusion between senatorial and equestrian offices took place (262, 290). It is interesting to note that at times when the *praefectus praetorio* was a knight promotion to the senatorial order was equivalent to an honorary dismissal from office (258-259).

The attitudes of individual Emperors concerning the admission of knights into the senatorial order varied greatly (276-291). Admission into the senatorial order rested with the Emperor, who made use of this power for political and administrative purposes; in view of the fact, however, that the old senatorial fam-

ilies were extinct, the admission of new men to the Senate became a necessity (359, 361, 215). But by the admission of the unworthy into the Senate the same havoc was wrought in this body as was wrought in the equestrian order by the infiltration of the dregs of society into that body (125-127, 277). Thus the original advantage which the two orders derived from the influx of new blood and new elements was lost, and, since each order depended on the other for replenishment, both were doomed to deteriorate, especially after the influx of lower social strata from distant oriental provinces began (277, 360). It is clear that the Senate then ceased to represent an aristocracy of birth.

Space does not permit me to dwell long on this chapter. I shall limit myself therefore to a consideration of the way in which the social rise of equestrian families took place. It became a rule that the son of a knight who held a procuratorial or prefectorial office should enter upon the same career as the son of a senator. Thus descendants of knights are to be found in the second or third generation in the Senate. Three different ways by which this rise took place can be observed. A knight paves the way to a senatorial career for his son (a) through his merits and the Emperor's high opinion of him (293-345), (b) through marriage into a senatorial family (293, 345-357); or (c) through adoption by a man of senatorial rank (293, 357-363). The transition of a family from the equestrian into the senatorial order is often shown by the fact that of two brothers one is a knight, the other a senator (302); often too, a father is a knight and his son a senator (307).

Since the birthplaces of Roman senators, of the highest dignitaries of the equestrian order, and of Roman army officers and soldiers have formed a topic for much scholarly discussion, the author proposes to investigate (in Chapter V) the native towns of the knights outside of Rome, especially of the equestrian administrative officers (363, 367), in other words the contribution which Italy and the provinces made to the equestrian and, later, to the senatorial order. The presentation of the scattered evidence is a masterpiece. After a preliminary discussion of the distinguishing marks of domicile (363-367), there follows an examination of the contributions made by all the Italian districts and by the countries outside of Italy which composed the Empire. So far as military and administrative officers are concerned, it is interesting to notice that, while the contribution of Greece proper was very small in proportion to her cultural importance², the contribution of the Greek East was larger; this included many senators (396-397). Especially large was the quota from Syria (405-409). The conclusion reached is that the equestrian order was in the course of time replenished not only from the lowest dregs of Roman society, but also from more and more remote regions, and even from barbarian districts. Thus the contribution of the West kept steadily dwindling, to the advantage of the East; in the third

²One of the reasons was a poor command of the Latin language

century Syria, Arabia, and Egypt took the lead (415). Thus the national character of the ruling classes disappeared, and the way to world citizenship was paved.

Up to this point the author has discussed the internal structure of the equestrian order. He now proceeds to present the social, economic, and political position of the order (Chapter VI), especially in its relations to the State and to society (419). The equestrian career was considered so honorable that many knights did not care to advance to the higher order (425). After Hadrian the influence of the knights upon military, civil, and judicial administration marks an epoch. Septimius Severus and Caracalla increased the political importance of the knights, and Gallienus did so on a still larger scale, by appointing equestrians to military positions previously held only by senators (445-447). The difference between the senatorial and the equestrian orders became smaller than that which marked these two privileged classes off from other strata of society (425); as a matter of fact, so far as the legal position was concerned, especially in criminal law, there was hardly any difference at all between the two orders (437). The great power of the *Ordo Equestris* in the organization of the Roman Empire is best illustrated by its most powerful exponent, the *praefectus praetorio* (447-448).

Thus social prestige went hand in hand with the increase in political importance (427, 438). With the gradual disappearance of the differences in wealth even the economic basis for the separation between the two orders (see above) lost its justification (440).

With a discussion of the disintegration of the Equestrian Order the book comes to a close (Chapter VII). With the rule of Gallienus the Order reached the climax of its political prestige, especially, as has been mentioned, through the exclusion of senators from military commands. But this expansion in power really meant the doom of the equestrian order, for it brought it nearer to the senatorial order, into which it was finally absorbed. In addition, the numerical increase in the ranks of the Order caused it to lose its privileged position in the army (455). The equestrian order practically went out of existence before the time of Constantine the Great (457).

It is now time to consider the value of the book as a whole. The arrangement of the material and the evidence is methodically excellent, and shows the hand of a mature and experienced scholar. The impartiality with which all vexed problems are recorded and analyzed is also highly commendable. There is a searching reexamination of all the sources, and, in consequence, there are modifications of current theories (for example, those of Mommsen, Domaszewski, Herzog, Willems, and others), or a refutation of them, as, for example, of the imaginative views of Soltau (87-96). The personal contributions of the author are of great value: among them may be mentioned Chapter V and the evidence concerning the admission to the higher orders of Greeks from the East, a demonstration which, so far as the reviewer's knowledge goes, is here attempted for the first time. An excellent

Index (468-503) adds to the value of the book, which is very well printed.

This work, then, can be considered an important addition to the library of a student of Roman history.

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MAGICAL CIRCLES AS BARRIERS TO SNAKES

In an article by Charles M. Bogert, entitled *The Pacific Rattlesnake*, published in *Nature Magazine*, November, 1927, pages 297-299, there is a picture of a rattlesnake crawling over a rope of horse hair. In the text we find this statement: "The old method <of campers> of 'keeping rattlers out of camp' by encircling their camp at night with horse hair rope is quite amusing. Actual experiments show that a rattlesnake will crawl over such a rope when by going four inches farther he could have gone around one end". By a rather remarkable coincidence, at the end of the same month (November 27, 1927) the *Detroit News* published a somewhat similar picture of a rattlesnake gliding over such a rope. It states that "innumerable horse hair ropes are being sold today" to protect people sleeping within them.

The idea of seeking safety from snakes by resorting to a magical circle is not new, or even comparatively new. At Tenos, *κατὰ Θερραλίαν*, a mother, wishing to protect herself and her son from a very dangerous sacred serpent, drew a circle about her and put in it some magical substance. Just as soon as the snake crawled over the circle it died¹.

It was popularly believed to be as difficult to cross a circle from within as from without. Pliny the Elder² tells us that, if fire and a snake are enclosed in a circle made of leaves from an ash tree, the snake will seek escape in the fire rather than come in contact with the leaves. From the same author (25.101) we learn that a snake caught within a circle of betony will lash itself to death with its tail.

The circle has been regarded as an impassable barrier for other creatures. In order to keep caterpillars away from trees a woman, with feet bare and girdle unbound, walked around them one by one³. In *Hiawatha* (Chapter 13) Longfellow picturesquely describes a similar practice of the Indians to protect their fields from caterpillars and other kinds of insects as well as from blight and mildew.

Examples of this sort of magic might easily be multiplied, but enough have been given to show that the circle is the common denominator. There are, however, some superstitions in which the circle is in fact the only magical element. In parts of our own country it is believed that "If after catching an eel you draw a circle around it, it cannot get out of the circle"⁴.

¹Pseudo-Aristotle, *De Mirabilibus Auscultationibus* 151.

²Naturalis Historia 16.64.

³Pliny, N. H. 17.266. Compare Aelian, *Historia Animalium* 6.36; *Geoponica* 12.8.5-6.

⁴Daniel L. Thomas and Lucy B. Thomas, *Kentucky Superstitions*, No. 3687, page 272 (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1920).

According to Pliny (8.106) any animal around which a hyena walked three times stuck fast in its tracks.

A strange piece of circle lore is seen in the accounts of the meeting of a Roman commander, Caius Popilius Laenas, with King Antiochus in Syria, in 168 B. C. With a stick the Roman drew a circle around Antiochus and told him to stay inside it until he gave answer to the contents of a letter which had just been handed to him⁵. This act may well have been a quasi-legal proceeding, like one witnessed by Marco Polo⁶ in the province of Maabar:

...The king was indebted in a sum of money to a certain foreign merchant, and although frequently importuned for payment, amused him for a long time with vain assurances. One day when the king was riding on horseback, the merchant took the opportunity of describing a circle round him and his horse. As soon as the king perceived what had been done, he immediately ceased to proceed, nor did he move from the spot until the demand of the merchant was fully satisfied. The bystanders beheld what passed with admiration, and pronounced that king to merit the title of most just, who had himself submitted to the laws of justice.

The last examples show that the circle by itself has magical properties. In general, when other magical elements were introduced, they were probably insurance, to make doubly sure. Gradually, however, if I may mix metaphors, the deuteragonists became protagonists and the purpose of the circle was obscured and sometimes forgotten⁷.

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ON THE SHEDDING OF SKINS BY HUMAN BEINGS

In both Greek and Latin the words for 'old age' (*γῆρας*, *senectus*, *senecta*) are employed to indicate the cast-off skin of an animal. In Folk-Lore in the Old Testament¹, 1.50, note 1, Sir James G. Frazer points out that such uses indicate a belief in the renewal of youth by sloughing the skin. Homer, *Iliad* 9.445-446, speaking of casting off old age, uses the same type of expression that later writers employed to describe the casting off by animals of the skin or other integuments.

That Sir James G. Frazer's deduction is by no means fanciful is indicated by the words a squaw addressed to a woman who had witnessed the funeral of a Mohave youth:

"Indians don't die," she murmured. "They shed their skins like snakes and we burn up the old skins so that they can be used again."²

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⁵Livy 45.12.4-5; Polybius 29.27.1-5.

⁶Travels of Marco Polo, 359 (Everyman's Library, 1907). See also *ibidem*, footnote 3, where the Brahman use of a small stick for a similar purpose is described.

⁷For interesting collections of lore of the magical circle see S. Eitrem, *Der Rundgang*, in *Opferitus und Voropfer der Griechen und Römer*, 6-75 (Christiania, 1915), and the chapter on Circular Movements and Symbols in L. D. Burdick, *Foundation Rites, With Some Kindred Ceremonies*, 149-166 (The Abbey Press, London, New York, Montreal, 1901). <See also George Lyman Kittredge, *Witchcraft in Old and New England*, 52, 105, 202, 208, 210, 211, 282, 489, note 61 (Harvard University Press, 1929). C. K. >.

¹Macmillan and Company, London, 1919.

²Honoré Willies Morrow, *The Strangest Adventure a Woman Ever Had*, *The American Magazine* for January, 1929, 25-27, 80, 82, 84, 86. The quotation may be found on page 82.

A CHINESE PARALLEL TO A GREEK USE OF 'ANABASIS' AND 'KATABASIS'

An excellent Chinese parallel to the Greek usage in calling a journey or a march inland a 'going up' (*ἀνάβασις*) and the return journey a 'going down' (*κατάβασις*) is to be found in *The Atlantic Monthly*¹ for January, 1929, page 77: "The outward road <from Kueihua> to Mongolia or Chinese Turkestan is always 'up' while the return journey is 'down'".

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CLASSICAL ARTICLES IN NON-CLASSICAL PERIODICALS

IV

Illustrated London News—January 19, A Roman Bazaar in Trajan's Forum, Federico Halbherr [illustrated article summing up excavations made in 1928].

Litteris—December, Long review, very favorable, by Henri Seyrig, of Theodor Wiegand (editor), *Baalbek*, Bände I-III [the review is largely a discussion of the Syrian cults of Baalbek]; Review, rather unfavorable, by F. Wiegand, of Ernst Müller, *Cäsaren-Porträts*, III. Teil; Long review, generally favorable, by Martin P. Nilsson, of M. Rostovtzeff, *A History of the Ancient World*, I-II.

Modern Language Notes—March, Review, very unfavorable, by W. E. Leonard, of E. H. Blakeney, *Horace on the Art of Poetry*.

New England Quarterly—January, William Dwight Whitney, O. W. Long [a biographical account of the *New England Quarterly*—January, William Dwight great linguistic scholar, Professor of Sanskrit and Comparative Philology at Yale University, 1854-1894].

Nineteenth Century—February, Hesiod, a Neglected Pioneer-Poet, C. J. Cadoux ["the first Greek to regard ethical questions as suitable for poetical treatment—that is, to give them a prominent place in the spoken and unspoken thoughts of men"].

Political Science Quarterly—September, On Inland Transportation and Communication in Antiquity, William L. Westermann ["By 600 B. C. three new motive factors had come into the cultural areas about the eastern Mediterranean which contributed to the development of travel and transport by land. These were: the horse, the mule, and the camel, with the restriction to be observed that the horse was not used except for rapid communication and rapid travel". There is discussion of the Persian postal system, of maps, of traffic by road, river, and canal, and of the contributions of Rome to the advancement of travel and transportation].

Quarterly Review—January, Archaeological and Topographical Research in and near Rome, Part II, Thomas Ashby [Ostia, Terracina, Monte Circeo, Horace's Sabine Farm near Licenza].

Revue Historique—November-December, Review, generally favorable, by A. Grenier, of V. Gordon Childe, *The Dawn of European Civilization*²; Review, favorable, by A. Grenier, of Franz Oelmann, *Haus und Hof im Altertum*, Band I; Review, generally favorable, by Paul Cloché, of *The Cambridge Ancient History*, V-VI.

Saturday Review of Literature—March 2, Review, very favorable, by Garrett Mattingly, of Edward Kennard Rand, *The Founders of the Middle Ages*.

BROWN UNIVERSITY

JOHN W. SPAETH, JR.

¹In an article entitled *Camels and Camel Pullers*, 68-77, by Owen Lattimore.

²A modified version of this article, without references, appeared in *The Classical Journal* 24 (1929), 483-497.

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